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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ'S INTERIOR MINISTRY ISSUES WARRANT FOR  
PROMINENT SUNNI CLERIC

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b)  
) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary. On November 16 and 17, multiple Iraqi media sources reported that Iraq's Ministry of Interior (MOI) had issued a warrant for hard-line Sunni cleric Harith al-Dhari, currently in Jordan, on unspecified charges. MOI later announced that this was not an arrest warrant, but an "interrogation" warrant. Minister of Interior Jawad al-Bolani told CDA Speckhard that warrant is not political, and is based on evidence linking al-Dhari to terrorism and possibly the abduction of British citizen Margaret Hassan in ¶2005. The issuing of this warrant will further increase friction between Sunni and Shiite political leaders. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On November 16 and 17, multiple Iraqi media sources reported that Iraq's Ministry of Interior (MOI) had issued a warrant for the President of the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) Harith al-Dhari. The charges and nature of the warrant are still unclear. A GOI spokesman said on November 17 that the warrant is not an arrest warrant, but an "interrogation warrant." Al-Dhari is not currently in Iraq; he gave a November 17 al-Jazeera interview from Jordan.

¶3. (C) Al-Dhari is a hard line cleric who has consistently opposed Sunni participation in Iraq's Shiite-dominated government, particularly while Coalition Forces remain in Iraq. Al-Dhari has of late become so hard line that other AMS clerics have begun to distance themselves from his positions. Al-Dhari has recently spent much of his time outside Iraq, including in Saudi Arabia.

¶4. (C) Iraqi Sunni political figures are divided over al-Dhari. Iraqi VP al-Hashimi has privately told the Ambassador that al-Dhari is not playing a constructive role. On the other hand, Sunni Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mashadani has told the Ambassador that the Sunni "street" respects al-Dhari and he could play the role of a respected senior cleric, similar to the Shiite marjaeya. In the wake of the news, Sunni Tawafuq bloc leader Adnan Dulami publicly called for the government to rescind the warrant.

¶5. (S/NF) In a November 17 meeting with CDA Speckhard, National Security Advisor Muwwafaq al-Rubaie said that senior leaders in the GOI, including PM Maliki, had been caught by surprise by the warrant. He said the MOI had taken the decision without consulting others in the government. In a follow-on meeting, MOI Bolani told CDA Speckhard that the al-Dhari warrant was not politically driven but results from evidence linking him to terrorism, adding that al-Dhari is suspected of involvement in the 2004 abduction and murder of UK citizen and C.A.R.E. director Margaret Hassan. Bolani

emphasized to the CDA that he is non-political and is handling cases as they come to him.

¶6. (C) Comment: Although key facts are still unclear, this incident will increase friction between Iraq's Sunni and Shiite political leaders. It will also increase popular Sunni mistrust for the GOI, particularly in the wake of the November 14 mass kidnapping at the Ministry of Higher Education. In a private conversation with the Charge, NSA Rubaie lamented the MOI action and its political fallout and indicated that he and DPM Barham Saleh had to work hard to make sure the warrant was only for "questioning" as a way to mitigate its impact. End Comment.  
SPECKHARD